

REACTION TO THE FRENCH COLONIZATION OF INDO-CHINA

contemptuous of manual labour, and quite out of touch with the practical world, but he made an art of living. He was bound to disappear because he was an anachronism, but his successor is far less sympathetic, for he has lost the best in the old and acquired only the worst of the new. Western culture in Annamite hands is deformed, just as the French language is distorted by their pronunciation. Both the language and ideas are hybrid. Annamites learn to live like Occidentals, dress like them, and repeat what they say. But though they can be trained in analysis, they are inept at synthesis and grasp of general ideas—even the most brilliant among them. Just as in the economic sphere they are extraordinarily subtle in serving their own immediate interests but inadequate in large-scale enterprises, so in the realm of ideas they are incoherent and clumsy when handling the abstract. Assimilation and memorizing rather than criticism and creation are, up to the present, their forte. They have evolved marvellously in a short period, but they have accumulated emotions more quickly than their ability to appraise or utilize them. They are suffering from an indigestion of Western culture. Time alone will reveal whether they or the superficial learning they have acquired will be the master. In the future they may be constructive, but up to now the destructive side has triumphed.

Altruism is conspicuously absent from Oriental psychology, and the Annamite mentality is not propitious for the propagation of Christianity. The family and commune are responsible for their own, and not the individual, beyond membership in those two groups. In fact, to some Annamites pity, charity, and benevolence are effeminate

emotions. A
 European does good for the comfortable feeling it
 gives him—more
 for the satisfaction of his vanity than for its efficacy.
 From the Buddhist
 viewpoint the emotional effect either on oneself or on
 others is inci-
 dental: one should do good, if at all, without knowing
 or caring to
 know how it is received, or whether the recipient is
 undeserving or
 otherwise, with the sole desire of remedying universal
 injustice. Charity
 that ends with the family and village harmonizes with
 the provincialism
 of old Annam. The universality of Christianity is
 inconceivable to
 men whose religion is that of their village gods. It does
 not necessitate
 public spirit—a complete void in the Annamite
 character. One who
 occupies himself with general welfare is suspected of
 neglecting a more
 imperious duty to his family. Christianity for the
 Annamite has been
 a disruptive force cutting across the closest of his ties.
 The highly loca-
 lized character of Annamite life, encouraged and
 enforced by religion